this application, then such extensions of time are hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a), and any fees required therefor (including fees for net addition of claims) are hereby authorized to be charged to our Deposit Account No. 19-0036.

Amendments

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 44, 98-102 and 127-129 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please substitute the following claim 42 for the pending claim 42:

42. (Twice amended) Isolated *E. coli* lacking endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

Please substitute the following claim 47 for the pending claim 47:

47. (Twice amended) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 48 for the pending claim 48:

48. (Twice amended) A method of cloning, comprising:

(a) obtaining competent *E. coli*;

(b) transforming said competent *E. coli* with at least one vector;

(c) selecting transformed *E. coli* containing said at least one vector; and

(d) culturing said transformed *E. coli*;

C2 cont'd

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

Please substitute the following claim 50 for the pending claim 50:

C3

50. (Twice amended) The method of claim 49, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

Please substitute the following claim 51 for the pending claim 51:

51. (Once amended) The method of claim 48, further comprising the step of isolating said vector from said transformed *E. coli*.

Please substitute the following claim 57 for the pending claim 57:

C4

57. (Twice amended) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 58 for the pending claim 58:

58. (Twice amended) A method of producing a protein or peptide, comprising:

(a) obtaining competent *E. coli*;

(b) transforming into said competent *E. coli* a vector containing a gene encoding a protein or peptide; and

(c) culturing said transformed *E. coli* under conditions that cause said transformed *E. coli* to produce said protein or peptide;

C4 cancel

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

Please substitute the following claim 63 for the pending claim 63:

C5

63. (Twice amended) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 64 for the pending claim 64:

C6

64. (Twice amended) A method of producing *E. coli* for cloning, comprising:

(a) obtaining *E. coli* having endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B; and

(b) curing said *E. coli* of endogenous plasmids.

Please substitute the following claim 68 for the pending claim 68:

68. (Twice amended) The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 69 for the pending claim 69:

69. (Twice amended) A method of transforming *E. coli*, comprising:

(a) obtaining competent *E. coli*;

(b) incubating said *E. coli* in the presence of one or more vectors under conditions which cause said one or more vectors to be taken up by said *E. coli*; and

(c) culturing said *E. coli*;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

Please substitute the following claim 74 for the pending claim 74:

74. (Twice amended) The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 75 for the pending claim 75:

75. (Twice amended) A kit for cloning comprising a container containing *E. coli* lacking endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the

growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

Please substitute the following claim 79 for the pending claim 79:

79. (Twice amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* are competent.

C8

Please substitute the following claim 80 for the pending claim 80:

80. (Twice amended) The kit of claim 79, wherein said *E. coli* are chemically competent.

Please substitute the following claim 81 for the pending claim 81:

81. (Twice amended) The kit of claim 79, wherein said *E. coli* are electrocompetent.

Please substitute the following claim 82 for the pending claim 82:

82. (Twice amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 83 for the pending claim 83:

83. (Twice amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

Please substitute the following claim 84 for the pending claim 84:

84. (Twice amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

C8 cancel

Please substitute the following claim 85 for the pending claim 85:

85. (Twice amended) A composition comprising *E. coli*, wherein said *E. coli* lack endogenous plasmids and have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

Please substitute the following claim 88 for the pending claim 88:

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88. (Twice amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

C9

Please substitute the following claim 89 for the pending claim 89:

89. (Twice amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

Please substitute the following claim 90 for the pending claim 90:

90. (Twice amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 91 for the pending claim 91:

91. (Twice amended) A method of making competent *E. coli,* comprising:

(a) obtaining *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B; and

(b) treating said *E. coli* to make it competent.

C9 cont'd

Please substitute the following claim 92 for the pending claim 92:

92. (Twice amended) The method of claim 91, further comprising the step of curing said *E. coli* of endogenous plasmids.

Please substitute the following claim 96 for the pending claim 96:

C10

96. (Twice amended) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 97 for the pending claim 97:

97. (Twice amended) *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B, wherein said *E. coli* has been made competent.

Please substitute the following claim 118 for the pending claim 118:

118. (Once amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 119 for the pending claim 119:

119. (Once amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 120 for the pending claim 120:

120. (Once amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 121 for the pending claim 121:

121. (Once amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 122 for the pending claim 122:

122. (Once amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please substitute the following claim 123 for the pending claim 123:

123. (Once amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

Please add the following claims:

130. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

131. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

132. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

133. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

134. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

135. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

136. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

137. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are chemically competent.

138. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are electrocompetent.

139. (New) A competent *E. coli* strain C.

140. (New) The competent *E. coli* of claim 139, wherein said *E. coli* is chemically competent.

141. (New) The competent *E. coli* of claim 139, wherein said *E. coli* is electrocompetent.

142. (New) A competent *E. coli* strain W.

143. (New) The competent *E. coli* of claim 142, wherein said *E. coli* is chemically competent.

144. (New) The competent *E. coli* of claim 142, wherein said *E. coli* is electrocompetent.

145. (New) An *E. coli* having deposit number NRRL B-30143 and derivatives thereof.

C12 Cont

146. (New) An *E. coli* having deposit number NRRL B-30144 and derivatives thereof.

147. (New) *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of NRRL B-30143, NRRL B-30144, ATCC 9637, and ATCC 33625, wherein said *E. coli* has been made competent.

148. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 147, wherein said microorganism is ATCC 9637.

149. (New) The *E. coli* of claim 147, wherein said *E. coli* has a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of microorganism ATCC 9637.